

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for the treatment of a patient with hepatic encephalopathy (HE) characterized by hyperammonemia and/or constipation, comprising orally administering to the patient a composition comprising polyethylene glycol (PEG) in an amount sufficient to reduce ammonia plasma levels and/or alleviate constipation in the patient.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the composition consists essentially of PEG.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the composition is administered in single dosages each containing from about 5 to 35 gm of dry PEG dissolved in water.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the composition further includes lactulose.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the composition comprises from about 0.15 to 3.5 parts by weight PEG to 1 part lactulose.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the composition comprises from about 0.5 to 3 parts by weight PEG to 1 part by weight lactulose.

7. The method of claim 4, wherein the composition is administered in single dosages each containing from about 5 to 35 gm of dry PEG dissolved in water.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein each dosage further contains from about 10 to 30 gm of dry lactulose dissolved in water.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein each dosage contains from 10 to 20 gm PEG and 10 to 20 gm lactulose.

10. A composition for the treatment of HE comprising from about 0.15 to 3.5 parts by weight PEG to 1 part lactulose.

11. The composition of claim 10 comprising from about 0.5 to 3 parts by weight PEG to 1 part by weight lactulose.

12. A single dosage composition for the treatment of HE comprising from about 5 to 35 gm of PEG.

13. The single dosage composition of claim 12, further comprising from about 10 to 30 gm of lactulose.

14. The single dosage composition of claim 13, comprising from about 10 to 20 gm PEG and 10 to 20 gm lactulose.

15. A method or composition according to claim 1, wherein the PEG is solid at room temperature.

16. A method or composition according to claim 4, wherein the PEG is solid at room temperature.

17. A method or composition according to claim 10, wherein the PEG is solid at room temperature.

18. A method or composition according to claim 12, wherein the PEG is solid at room temperature.

19. A method or composition according to claim 4, wherein the lactulose and PEG are each a dry powder.

20. A method or composition according to claim 10, wherein the lactulose and PEG are each a dry powder.

21. A method or composition according to claim 13, wherein the lactulose and PEG are each a dry powder.

22. A method or composition according to claim 1, wherein the composition is free of added electrolytes.

23. A method or composition according to claim 4, wherein the composition is free of added electrolytes.

24. A method or composition according to claim 10, wherein the composition is free of added electrolytes.

25. A method or composition according to claim 12, wherein the composition is free of added electrolytes.